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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: INGUSHETIYA'S OPPOSITION: YEVLOYEV REMAINS IN
HIDING, AUSHEV'S CLAN CALLS FOR DEMONSTRATION

REF: MOSCOW 207

Classified By: Political M/C Alice Wells for reason 1.4 (d).

11. (C) Summary: Opposition to Ingushetiya President Murat Zyazikov is becoming bolder. Magomed Yevloyev, owner of the banned opposition "Ingushetiya.ru" internet site and the force behind the "I Did Not Vote" campaign after the December 2007 Duma elections, came out of hiding long enough to charge (improbably) that only 3.5 percent of Ingushetiya's voters participated in the March 2 presidential elections -- a far cry from the official report of a 92.3 percent turnout. Members of the opposition have announced plans to hold a rally to demand the immediate release of opposition leader Maksharip Aushev. Opposition leaders have already rescheduled a demonstration to mark the anniversary of the deportation of Ingush to Central Asia by Stalin, originally scheduled for February 23, then rescheduled for March 4 to March 12. It is now being billed as a protest against corruption in the local government and human rights violations. An expert on the North Caucasus believes both the opposition and Zyazikov's government are controlled by the Kremlin, and Putin's support for Zyazikov has not publicly waned. End Summary.

Election Results Disputed, Again

12. (SBU) The official results of voting in Ingushetiya during the March 2 Russian presidential elections stated that 112,073 voters (92.3 percent) turned out of whom 91.7 percent voted for Putin's favored successor Dmitriy Medvedev. The United Russia party also fared well in local elections there, winning 74.09 percent of the vote for seats in the 27-member Ingush assembly according to unofficial results. Leading Ingush opposition figure and owner of the "Ingushetiya.ru" website Magomed Yevloyev quickly countered that according to observers placed at all of the republic's 160 polling stations, only 3.5 percent of voters had actually participated. Local opposition reportedly conducted its own polling (presumably of the vast majority it claims did not vote) and plans to create a parallel assembly based on the results of its poll. After the overwhelming turnout reported from the North Caucasus for the December 2007 Duma elections, Central Elections Commission head Vladimir Churov quietly asked that local election commissions there make sure that voting procedures be more transparent, including, possibly, videotaping the process of distributing ballots.

13. (C) Tatyana Lokshina, formerly of Demos but now an expert on Russian civil society and the North Caucasus with Human Rights Watch, told participants in a Moscow Carnegie Center roundtable March 3 that she does not give either figure for turnout much credence. She added that the result of Yevloyev's "I Did Not Vote" campaign after the December 2007 Duma elections is equally not believable. Yevloyev claimed

that over 87,000 people -- around half of the electorate -- registered on a website that they did not participate in the December Duma elections. According to Lokshina, internet penetration in Ingushetiya is very low and any attempt to go door-to-door to collect names and passport information would have most certainly not been allowed by the Federal Security Service (FSB) and local law enforcement. She noted that no one she met during her trip there the week of February 18 had seen the list of names. (Although Yevloyev is currently on Russia's "wanted list" Lokshina said it does not appear that the police are looking "very hard" for him.)

14. (C) Radio Ekho Moskvyy announced March 4 that an opposition group has asked for permission to hold a rally for the immediate release of Maksharip Aushev, arrested January 15 for his suspected role in preparing for an un-sanctioned January 26 demonstration in Nazran which turned violent (reftel). An event called by the opposition to mark the anniversary of the deportation of Ingush to Central Asia by Stalin, originally scheduled for February 23, then rescheduled for March 4, will now take place on March 12 and is being billed as a protest against corruption in the local government and human rights violations. Lokshina told us this demonstration has been repeatedly rescheduled at the behest of the Kremlin so as not to interfere first with the national holiday of Defenders of Fatherland (formerly Red Army Day), then presidential elections on March 2. Lokshina portrays this as evidence that both the opposition and Zyazikov's government are controlled by the Kremlin.

Continued Instability

15. (C) The situation in Ingushetiya remains unstable. On March 3 an explosion occurred in front of a private home in the Ordzhonikidzevskaya section of Nazran. Also on March 3, a policeman died from wounds received during a police patrol on February 22. On February 28 local law enforcement began a special operation in the Altiyev region of Nazran and as a result two young men and a middle-aged woman (presumed to be their mother) were killed. Authorities said that the two men were "known insurgents" and that the woman was a "potential suicide bomber." Lokshina told us February 29 that the population of Ingushetiya, although not politically active, is united in its desire to end the reign of the FSB there. Representatives of international humanitarian assistance organizations working in Ingushetiya report that the situation there is quiet, although many have complied with an FSB request to stay away from Nazran several days before and after the elections and are just now returning.

Comment:

16. (SBU) While it is difficult to determine the real turnout for the March 2 elections in Ingushetiya we agree with Lokshina that neither figures are believable. There is no evidence that the Kremlin is prepared to move against Zyazikov, despite earlier reports that Putin had reprimanded him for his inability to control the situation in Ingushetiya. On February 27 Putin awarded Zyazikov the Order of Merit to the Fatherland of the Third Degree "for his outstanding contribution to the socio-economic development of the country and many years of fruitful work."

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